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Six Etiquettes of Learning

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?Indeed a servant commits a sin by which he enters Paradise; and another does a good deed by which he enters the Fire.?



There are six stages to knowledge:

1. Asking questions in a good manner.
2. Remaining quiet and listening attentively.
3. Understanding well.
4. Memorizing.
5. Teaching.
6. Acting upon the knowledge and keeping to its limits.

Fruits of Humility

One of the Salaf (Pious Predecessors) said: "Indeed a servant commits a sin by which he enters Paradise; and another does a good deed by which he enters the Fire." It was asked: How is that? So he replied: "The one who committed the sin, constantly thinks about it; which causes him to fear it, regret it, weep over it and feel ashamed in front of his Lord - the Most High - due to it. He stands before Allah, broken-hearted and with his head lowered in humility. So this sin is more beneficial to him than doing many acts of obedience, since it caused him to have humility and humbleness - which leads to the servant's happiness and success - to the extent that this sin becomes the cause for him entering Paradise. As for the doer of good, then he does not consider this good a favor from his Lord Upon him. Rather, he becomes arrogant and amazed with himself, saying: I have achieved such and such, and such and such. So this further increases him in self-adulation, pride and arrogance - such that this becomes the cause for his destruction."

Purifying the Heart

"There is no doubt that the heart becomes covered with rust, just as metal dishes - silver, and their like - become rusty. So the rust of the heart is polished with Dthikr (remembrance of Allah), for Dthikr polishes the heart until it becomes like a shiny mirror. However, when Dthikr is abandoned, the rust returns; and when it commences then the heart again begins to be cleansed. Thus the heart becoming rusty is due to two



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matters: sins and Ghaflah (neglecting remembrance of Allah). Likewise, it is cleansed and polished by two things: Istighfar (seeking Allah's forgiveness) and Dthikr."

Jihad against the Self

Jihad (striving) against the soul has four stages:

1. To strive in learning guidance and the religion of truth; without which there will be no success. Indeed, there can be no true happiness, nor any delight in this world and in the Hereafter, except through it.
2. Striving to act upon what has been learnt, since knowledge without action will not benefit, rather it will cause harm.
3. Striving to invite others towards it and to teach those who do not know, otherwise he may be considered from those who hide what Allah has revealed of guidance and clear explanation. Such knowledge will neither benefit, nor save a person from the punishment of Allah.
4. Striving to be patient and persevering against those who oppose this Dawah (call) to Allah and those who seek to cause harm - patiently bearing all these hardships for the sake of Allah.

When these four stages are completed then such a person is considered to be amongst the pious. The Salaf were agreed that a scholar does not deserve the title of pious until he recognizes and knows the truth, acts upon it, and teaches it to others. So whosoever has knowledge, acts upon it, and teaches this knowledge to others, is considered from the pious.

Trials of the Heart

Ibn al-Qayyim said, whilst commenting upon the following Hadith: « Trials and tribulations will be presented to hearts, as a reed mat is interwoven stick by stick. Any heart which absorbs these trials will have a black mark put in it. However, any heart that rejects them will have a white mark put in it. The result is that hearts will be of two kinds: one white like a white stone, which will not be harmed by trials as long as the heavens and earth endure; and the other dark and rusty, like an over-turned vessel; not able to recognize the good, nor reject evil, but rather being absorbed with its desires. » [Reported by Muslim]

« تعرض الفتن على القلوب كالحصير عودا عودا . فأَي قلب أشربها نكت فيه نكتة سوداء . وأَي قلب أنكرها نكت فيه نكتة بيضاء . حتى تصير على قلبين ، على أبيض مثل الصفا . فلا تضره فتنة ما دامت السماوات والأرض . والآخر أسود مربادا ، كالكوز مجخيا لا يعرف معروفا ولا ينكر منكرا . إلا ما أشرب من هواه » رواه مسلم

"The Fitnah (trials) which are presented to the hearts - and which are the causes of its weakness - are: The trials relating to Shahwah (false desire) and The trials relating to Shubhah (doubt) So the first causes intentions and desires to be corrupted, whilst the second causes knowledge and beliefs to be corrupted."

Speaking about such trials, he said: "Hearts - when exposed to such Fitan (trials) - are of two types:

The first type: a heart, which, when exposed to such trials, absorbs it like a sponge that

soaks-up water, leaving in it a black stain. Such a heart continues to soak up the various trials that are presented to it, until it becomes dark and corrupted which is what is meant by "an over-turned vessel." So when this occurs, two dangerous and deadly diseases take hold of it and plunge it into destruction:

(i) Confusing good with evil, so it neither recognizes the good, nor rejects the evil. This disease may take hold of it to such an extent that it believes good to be evil; and evil to be good, Sunnah to be Bid'ah (innovation); and innovations to be the Sunnah. And the truth to be falsehood; and falsehood the truth.

(ii) Judging by its whims and desires, over and against what Allah's Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him) came with being enslaved by its whims and desires and being led by them also.

The second type: a white heart in which the light of remain is bright and its radiance is illuminating. So when trials are presented to such a heart, it rejects and turns away from them. This further increases its light and illumination and its strength."

Four Principles of Worship

The Ayah: {You (Alone) we worship...} [Al-Faatiha Quran 1:5]

{إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ...} الفاتحة: 1

Transliteration: Iyyaka naAAbudu

is built upon four principles: Ascertaining what Allah and His Messenger love and are pleased with, from:

- (i) The sayings of the heart
- (ii) Of the tongue;
- (iii) The actions of the heart
- (iv) Of the limbs

So al-'Ubudiyyah (servitude and slavery to Allah) is a comprehensive term for all these four Stages. The one who actualizes them has indeed actualized: "You alone do we worship."

(i) **The saying of the heart:** It is I'tiqad (belief) in what Allah - the Most Perfect - informed about His Self; concerning His Names, His Attributes, His Actions, His Angels, and all that He sent upon the tongue of His Messenger (Peace and blessings be upon him).

(ii) **The saying of the tongue:** It is to inform and convey (what Allah has revealed), to call to it, defend it, explain the false innovations which oppose it, establish its remembrance and to convey what it orders.

(iii) **The action of the heart:** Such as love for Him, reliance upon Him, repenting to Him, having fear and hope in Him, making the Deen purely and sincerely for Him, having patience in what He orders and prohibits, having patience with what He decrees and being pleased with it, having allegiance and enmity for His sake, humbling oneself in front of Him and having humility in front of Him, becoming tranquil with Him and other than this from the actions of the heart which are actually connected to the action of the limbs ... and actions of the limbs without the action of the heart is of little benefit if any

benefit at all.

(iv) **The action of the limbs:** Such as Prayer and Jihad, attending the congregation and being with it, aiding those who are unable and displaying goodness and kindness to the creation, and other than this.

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